

FACT SHEET



FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy

Adolescent Parenting Research

It should be noted that “. . . some adolescent mothers and their children have favorable outcomes and do very well in spite of numerous adversities.”

* In general, however, researchers find differences in the quality of parenting given by teenage mothers as compared to adult mothers.

REFERENCES

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RESEARCH

Adolescent mothers engage in less smiling and positive eye and physical contact with their infants than adult mothers, even when matched on socioeconomic and ethnic characteristics. They talk less, give more commands and authoritarian statements, and make fewer elaborated, descriptive, and articulate responses.

Teenage mothers are more passive in their face-to-face interactions, and they score lower than adult mothers in maternal-affectional match, rate of stimulation, flexibility, positivity, motivation, and overall quality of mothering.

Adolescent mothers have been found to be less committed, less satisfied, and less skilled than older mothers.

Teen mothers are more likely to be depressed than older mothers, and depressed mothers are less emotionally available for their children.

The children of teen mothers speak less and are more likely to have poorer cognitive and linguistic outcomes.

Teenage mothers are perceived as less sensitive, less responsive, more restricted, more physically intrusive, and more punitive in their child-rearing practices compared with adult mothers.

REFERENCES	RESEARCH
<p>Osofsky, J.D., Hann, D.M., & Peebles, C. (1993). Adolescent parenthood: Risks and opportunities for mothers and infants. In C. H. Zeanah (Ed.), <i>Handbook of infant mental health</i> (1st ed., pp. 106-119). New York: Guilford.</p>	<p>Adolescent mothers are less knowledgeable about child development than are adult mothers. They generally underestimate social, cognitive, and language functioning and overestimate the attainment of developmental milestones. Compared to adult mothers, teenage mothers also have been reported to perceive their infants' temperaments as more difficult.</p>
<p>Tamis-Lemonda, C.S., Shannon, J., & Spellman, M. (2002). Low-income adolescent mothers' knowledge about domains of child development. <i>Infant Mental Health Journal</i>, 23(1-2), 88-103.</p>	<p>Teen mothers are generally aware of the order of developmental abilities, but are less aware of the timing (age onset) of abilities. Also, adolescent mothers are better at estimating first-year abilities than estimating second- and third-year abilities. In general, their knowledge of cognitive, language, and motor development is significantly stronger than their knowledge about play and social development.</p>
<p>SmithBattle, L. (1996). Intergenerational ethics of caring for adolescent mothers and their children. <i>Family Relations</i>, 45, 56-64.</p>	<p>An adolescent mother's confidence, skill and learning to relate to her baby are not solely dependent on the mother's attitude and / or aptitude, but also on her family's traditions and routines surrounding parenting and her relationships with her family.</p>
	<p>An adolescent mother's attentiveness to her infant is fostered when she is neither coerced into nor excluded from care. Responsive caregiving is anchored in relationships of trust and respect that foster a sense of self worth, acceptance, responsibility, and power to act on behalf of one's child.</p>
<p>SmithBattle, L. (2000). Developing a caregiving tradition in opposition to one's past: Lessons from a longitudinal study of teenage mothers. <i>Public Health Nursing</i>, 17(2), 85-93.</p>	<p>Having attentive listeners and positive models to support and validate emerging visions of positive parenting can strengthen the aspirations of adolescent mothers.</p>
<p>Sadler, L.S., Swartz, M.K., & Ryan-Krause, P. (2003). Supporting adolescent mothers and their children through a high school based child care center and parent support program. <i>Journal of Pediatric Health Care</i>, 17(3), 109-117.</p>	<p>High school-based parenting programs with a child care center have a positive effect on the parenting attitudes of adolescent mothers and may be a protective factor contributing to better outcomes for teen mothers and their children.</p>

* Zeanah, C.H., Boria, N.W., & Larieu, J.A. (1997). Infant development and developmental risk: A review of the past ten years. *Journal of the American Academy of Adolescent Psychiatry*, 36(2), 165-178.